# Interview with Burnett Anderson

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BURNETT ANDERSON

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Experience Prior to Federal Government Employment

*Q: Burnett, I noted before you got into government, you had a long and interesting career which, in some respects, prepared you for the government. I wonder if you could give us a summary of your career before the government.*

ANDERSON: Sure, I'll be glad to. I came out of the University of Rochester, New York, in 1940, with a B.A. degree in economics and not much idea of what I wanted to do. I got a job with the Vick Chemical Company in one of the pioneer management training programs. I was on the road selling. Their idea of training was to get you out selling Vicks to drugstores and general stores, mostly in the South. It only took about six months for me to decide definitively and permanently that the world of business was not for me.

By the end of the following year, I had managed to get back to my home area and was appointed press secretary to Governor Harold Stassen of Minnesota. This was a long time before he became a quadrennial joke. It was a very interesting go for a couple of years.

In 1944, I finally achieved what was really, I guess, my latent ambition for a long time, and became a reporter on the Minneapolis papers, the Cowles empire. After a year or so of general reporting, I found myself right back in politics as a political writer. In 1947, I went overseas as a foreign correspondent, writing principally for the Minneapolis papers, but gradually picking up ABC Radio—this was pre-television, of course—and Look magazine.

*Q: You were based where?*

ANDERSON: I was based in Stockholm during these five years, but traveled very steadily through the whole Scandinavian area, including Finland. Of course, these were fascinating times after the war. One of the most interesting stories was the way that Finland escaped coming fully under the domination of the Soviets and managed to survive very largely as an independent nation.

1951: Entrance Into U.S. Government Information Work - The Marshall Plan

Then in 1952, the head of the Marshall Plan organization in Germany persuaded me to come down and put in a little public service, which I thought would be a year or two before I went back to my real love of news work. I became press officer for the Marshall Plan organization, which was then a very large information operation. In fact, the information budget for Germany, West Germany alone, the year I came there was $65 million, almost as big as the total Agency's budget a couple of years later.

1954: Brought Into USIA in Washington

This was exciting. 1953 was the year of the first anti-communist riots in Berlin. I was in Berlin doing a good deal of information work on that at the time. But in late 1953, as we know, USIA was created, and early in '54, Ted Streibert and Abbott Washburn brought me back to handle domestic press relations for USIA.

*Q: Let us identify those two men, please.*

ANDERSON: Ted Streibert was the Director of the Agency.

*Q: He was the first one.*

ANDERSON: The first one, appointed by Eisenhower. He was a veteran radio executive. Abbott Washburn was out of Minneapolis. He had been an Eisenhower supporter in the campaign, and he got the deputy position. I had known Abbott a little bit back in Minnesota when he had worked for General Mills

In any event, this was a fascinating year. We were still in the so-called [Joseph] McCarthy era, and I had the pleasure of tangling, at least tangentially, with Joe a couple of times, whom I had known, by the way, and covered a little bit when he first ran for the Senate of Wisconsin in 1946.

Deputy Director USIA Press and Publication Service

In any event, then a very interesting job came along. The Press and Publication Service was being run by a chap named Lee Briggs, a veteran, and a successful one, of many years in New York advertising agencies, a wonderful, creative guy, marvelous idea man, superb gentleman, but no executive. He chose me as deputy, and I found myself pretty well running the place.

There was one thing that happened that is very # propos at the moment with the so-called communist empire crumbling in Europe. During World War II, we had an exchange of magazines with the Soviet Union. In the year 1955, Eisenhower had come up with his famous Open Skies proposal, the idea of mutual observation of our military establishments by satellite photos. This was a main subject on the agenda at a summit meeting with Khrushchev, I think in Geneva, at the end of 1955.

Trials and Ultimate Success Birth of Post-War Magazine “Amerika”

Included on the agenda was a proposal to have now a peacetime exchange of magazines, as we did during World War II, and when the conference was over, absolutely nothing had been agreed on. Then to our tremendous surprise a couple of months later, the Soviets came through and said, “Well, we'll do the magazines.” It would have been January or February of 1956 when we were faced with producing a new version of “Amerika.”

In any event, I was doing the testifying for the Press Service before the notorious John J. Rooney, the scourge of the foreign affairs establishment and the administration, as head of the Appropriations Subcommittee in the House. I told him, when he raised the question that the magazine had come up too late to be included in the budget, but that we would reprogram and get it going. Ted Streibert had called me in just a couple of days earlier and told me that the monkey was on my back, and not only was it on my back, but that we had to move fast. He and others apparently had the idea that the Soviets may have been preparing for this quietly and were all ready to dump their first issue on us at the moment the papers were signed, and we would look silly if we couldn't get a magazine going in short order.

In any event, Rooney also asked about the cost of it, and based on the World War II experience, I was stupid enough—or Ted was, or both of us—to say, “Well, based on what we did before, it looks like it will be pretty much of a wash. We'll get enough income to cover it.”

Anyway, everything worked well. I decided to print in Berlin. The cost was only about 40% of what it would be in the United States, and also to do the translating over there. I sent my chief of operations, whose name, of course, I can't remember, over to take care of the Berlin end of it.

The Washington end, we drew on our own resources. Herb McGushin, who had been Chief of the News Division, got the job as editor and chief honcho, and there were other talents available in house, in terms of the magazines that we had already been putting

out in many languages for many parts of the world. We worked awfully hard, and we were very, very fortunate that everything went well. We had our first 50,000 copies, which was the agreed number, in Moscow, in the embassy, ready for distribution by July 4.

But then some other things didn't go so well. In any event, the Soviets weren't ready, and by the time we started actually putting out the magazines on both sides, it was probably September or October, we had three issues in the bank by that time and a very nice little backlog.Meanwhile, it was drawing some public attention, and the printers unions and printers trades in New York had come down and made a d#marche, saying, “This should be an American product. We shouldn't be printing something for the Soviet Union in a foreign country. We're just going to insist that this has to be brought back and printed in the United States.”

Then the negotiations with the Soviets were terribly tough. Earlier, we had gotten a 90% return of the retail price and, of course, the magazine sold out every month. The magazine would not have been financed by the taxpayers in this case. But the Soviets found, in dealing with U.S. distributors, that they couldn't get any kind of a break like that, and they would be lucky to net 50% of the retail price in the United States. Furthermore, their magazine couldn't be sold at a high price in the United States; it had to be competitive with other magazines that carry advertising and so on.

Also, the State Department imposed their wishes about the magazine. We had wanted to go with something a little more newsy, a little more informative, a little less glossy than the World War II product, which had been kind of a Life magazine style, using a lot of color, big, glossy paper and so on. They said, “Look, if we go in with anything less impressive than before, they'll think we're poor, and we've got to maintain the same kind of quality and standard.”

So we brought the printing back to the U.S., we put out that kind of magazine, and we argued with the Soviets about distribution. All they were willing to give us was exactly the

same percentage of return that they were getting on their magazine. Then on top of that, their magazine wasn't selling very well. Soviet Life didn't really compete very well with Life magazine and Good Housekeeping and Holiday and all the other magazines available on the newsstands. So that also affected the income.

I had the pleasure, if you call it that, of doing the negotiating on this with the editor of Soviet Life, who was based at the Soviet Embassy here in Washington. It was really very funny, because we kept trying to bring the pressure on to have them sell more magazines, but always the number of returns that we got as unsold was exact, exactly the same figure as the number of unsold copies they had for that particular month. Our magazines were used, of course. They were delivered back to the embassy and they were used as handouts there, or they were distributed with exhibits when we were able to stage exhibits in the Soviet Union and so on, and, of course, tremendously popular individual pages from the magazine sold on the Black Market at very substantial prices in the Soviet Union.

However, every time I had a long conversation with my Soviet counterpart and explained how this was a free society and you had to make the best deal you could, and the government couldn't distribute the magazines for them, it wasn't our fault if they weren't getting as good distribution as they wanted. That was their problem. The last line was always the same. I can quote it today. After saying, “Well, I understand everything you've told me and I realize our systems are different,” and so on and so on, my Soviet counterpart would conclude, “but it comes down to one thing. I sell magazines. You sell magazines.” That was the bottom line. [Laughter]

Eventually, they did better, and I think maybe even the CIA at one point went in and started buying up a few copies of their magazine in order to increase the sales so that more of ours would get out in the Soviet Union.

But I had the problem of going back up to face John Rooney on the financing of the magazine. It was now in the budget for over half a million dollars. Sure enough, about the

first question I got asked was, “Well, last year you were up here and told us this magazine wasn't going to cost anything. Now here you are asking for half a million dollars. What's the story?” Well, happily, in the dry runs, you know, when we faced Rooney, we tried to figure out what questions would be asked and to develop the best possible answers. I had been sweating this one for months. I knew it was going to be mean and I didn't want to be kicked around by him. He could ask that same question in many ways and fill a lot of pages of the record with how spendthrift we were and so on.

But Bill Hutchinson, who was then the newsroom chief, came up with the key. We were sitting around the table in my office, playing the question-and-answer game four days before the hearing, and all of a sudden, Bill asked, in his rather sly way, “Well, this is being printed by union labor. Has it got a union bug on it anywhere?” So I thought for a minute or so and I said, “Yeah. Rooney's district is full of printing companies, isn't it, and unions?” So I immediately dictated a telegram to the Soviet Union, to our embassy in Moscow.

When Rooney asked the question, I said, “Well, yes, there's been a change in the financing, but I think it can be explained.”

He said, “I'd like to have you make a try.”

So I said, “(A) We had to make a more expensive product than we planned. (B) We couldn't get the kind of distribution proceeds that we thought we'd get from the Soviet Union. And (C), most important, this ought to be a totally American product printed by American union printers and printing trades. So we moved it back. Right now we're exploring with our embassy in Moscow about including the union label on it, saying that this magazine is printed in the United States by free American unionized labor, locals number so and so and so and so.” And there weren't any more questions. [Laughter]

*Q: Good story.*

ANDERSON: So the magazine turned out to be very successful. We were lucky in having good talent, won lots of prizes, and eventually the distribution tended to get improved. As we look at what's happening now, a lot of people are wondering whether our efforts over the years, that is to say, USIA, specifically in terms of getting information to people by various means, including this magazine, may have played a part in what has eventually evolved there. In any event, we know that we were on the side of the angels.

*Q: After your assignment with IPS, which lasted until 1957, your next assignment was what?*

1957: Assignment as PAO and Counselor of Embassy in Tehran

ANDERSON: The next assignment was Iran. The fact was that I considered my stay in Washington temporary. I had gone overseas because I wanted to see the world, I wanted to work overseas, and I saw people constantly rotating. From time to time, personnel or an area director had approached me for an overseas job, but when Hunt Damon came along and, in effect, offered me Iran, that really—

*Q: Let's identify him.*

ANDERSON: Hunt was Assistant Director for the Near East Area at that time. That one really excited me. The offer coincided with a trip I had to make to Manila, where the Press Service ran a printing plant, and to Beirut, where we ran another one, which was part of my operation involving several hundred people. The trip gave me a chance to stop in Tehran and have a little look at it. I had never been in that part of the world before, and once I had spent a couple of days there and gotten a feel for what was going on, I decided I really wanted it. My wife, who was a veteran of the Swedish Foreign Service, that's how I had met her originally, was all for it. We had two very young sons, but they were old enough to move anywhere, and we decided to go and were very excited about it.

In view of what has subsequently happened, I have often thought of a conversation I had with a counselor of the Iranian Embassy before I went to Iran. I had arranged to meet him to pick up some background and so on, and one of the things he did was trace Iran's history of relations with various other major countries. As I recall, he started with Russia and the problems with Russia, and how Iran now had no time for the Soviet Union, and then how they had had a love affair with France, and how that had gone sour. Then the Germans rose to be friend number one in the 1930s, as I recall, followed by the British, who put the young Shah back on the throne early in the 1940s, and how that had gone wrong. But he said, “We don't have any reason to hate the United States yet.” Well, a few years later, they found some reasons, apparently.

In any event, Iran was fascinating at the time. We did have very close relations with the Shah. Even I, with the rank of counselor, dealt directly with the prime minister, the foreign minister, the minister of court. We were personal friends. They were in and out of our house from time to time, and one really felt close to the people you were working with.

It was a challenging time, both in terms of living conditions and so on, but I thought a very rewarding one.

*Q: What were our major activities at that time? We had a Fulbright program?*

ANDERSON: We had a Fulbright program. In fact, I think we started the Fulbright program there. Martin Ackerman, another colleague, was my cultural affairs officer. I really got involved with students there, because I thought it was the upcoming generation that was going to be the important one, and if I accomplished anything major, I think it was actually being able to penetrate into the University of Tehran and establish a full-time Student Center, which drew very well. Obviously no results of it are visible today, but we made the effort. We also had an extremely thriving Iran-America Center, and I was able to raise the money and break the ground for a beautiful independent building, which, of course, went with everything else when we got thrown out of there.

Anderson Selected for National War College 1957, But Postponed it Until 1960

But as I say, a very rewarding time, so much so that in 1959, I was offered an appointment to the War College and I asked to postpone it for a year, and they said, “You can't do that. You've got to take it or turn it down and then take your chances in the next year's competition.”

I said, “Well, I think two years is too little for what we've got invested in me here, and I'm going to take another year.” But happily, a year later the appointment to the War College came through again and I came back to the States in the late spring of 1960 to spend a year at Fort McNair.

*Q: That brings us up to your assignment after the War College. Will you proceed with that, Burnett?*

ANDERSON: Fine. One of the many, many people who came through Iran—I'd like to digress here and talk about a presidential visit.

*Q: Sure.*

During Which Time Received President Eisenhower Visit And a Short Visit by Ed Murrow

ANDERSON: Because it may also be # propos and I feel kind of strongly about it. Eisenhower made a tour. I think it was in December of 1959, going to several Near East points and, I think, a couple of European stops. Anyway, he had half a day in Iran. We had to prepare to receive him. The advance party at that time consisted of Jim Hagerty and a communications expert. They came in, spent some time with us. We laid out the details, figured out the parade routes and so on.

*Q: Let's identify Hagerty for the newer generation.*

ANDERSON: Jim Hagerty was Eisenhower's press secretary, a great and well-known veteran of years of writing for the New York Times. That was the advance party. The communications guy arranged to increase temporarily the number of lines of communication with the world. I think at that time the total was one full-time telephone line and one teletype circuit out of Tehran. That was our electronic link to the world. [Laughter]

That visit went flawlessly in every respect, and I like to think back how it was handled then with a couple of people coming out from the White House, and the embassy doing the job it's supposed to, as compared with the imperial advance team and the pre-advance team. Now a pre-advance team goes out from the White House and makes sure everything is ready for the advance team when it comes in, and these are full-time positions. I shudder to think of that layer upon layer of stuff there.

*Q: Do you have any observations on the caliber of our local employees, either there or in other posts where you've been?*

ANDERSON: I think we've been very lucky in the caliber of employees we've been able to get everywhere. I've always had many very good ones, a few real duds. You sometimes get a kind of distortion. In Iran, for example, they sometimes referred to the American Embassy as the Armenian Embassy because we had such a high proportion of Armenians on the local staff. But I had absolutely marvelous support, people who were working for minimal salaries, but who were maybe carrying doctoral degrees or had the qualifications that would have made them top-level executives in any Foreign Service anywhere in the world.

*Q: Do you suppose that any of them were abused or suffered later when the Iran Government took over our embassy?*

ANDERSON: I have no news of that. I would like to know. There are many people whom I remember fondly. I do know that some of them got out. One is, or was until recently,

employed by the State Department here, an extremely talented man, a responsible and civilized person. The Iranians, it seemed to me, produced some of the best and most civilized people I've ever dealt with, as well as this incredibly frightening fanatic wing that eventually seized power.

Murrow's Visit Probably Led (1961) to Anderson's Assignment To Special Inter-Agency Group Study on Counterinsurgency

Anyway, we did get Eisenhower in and out, and then got me back into the War College. Another visitor was Ed Murrow. That was his sabbatical year, but as always, he was working. He came in for a couple of weeks and did a major feature on Iran. We spent a lot of time together. That may have been—probably was—instrumental in my next assignment, because when Murrow became head of the Agency in the early part of 1961, he not only eventually found me sort of hiding out down there in the obscurity of the War College, but pulled me out of there before the year was finished, to pick up on a special inter-agency study. We did a thing on what was called limited warfare in remote areas. The study was done by a large inter-agency team, and was one of the foundations for the creation of President Kennedy's special group for counterinsurgency. Bobby Kennedy chaired it.

So then began the fascinating years of work, first with Ed Murrow as Director of USIA, then with Carl Rowan, and then with Leonard Marks, a succession of three very different and three very remarkable people.

And to Associate Deputy Director, USIA, for Policy & Plans

*Q: Your positions during those years were what, Burnett?*

ANDERSON: The first position was created for me. It was called Associate Deputy Director of the Agency for Policy and Plans, and it was essentially as deputy to the Deputy Director for Policy and Plans. The hierarchy, as most people would remember, was

Murrow as Director, Don Wilson, who had come out of Time Life, as Deputy Director, and Tom Sorensen, who had been a career officer but was moved up by Murrow to the number-three job in the Agency, and mine was generally regarded as the number-four job. It was, I think, a very happy working arrangement. Of course, Murrow was an inspiration to most of the people, including me, who worked for him any length of time.

The Cuban Missile Crisis - 1962, And —

They were heady times. One of the most unusual things that happened had to do with the Cuban crisis of 1962. I was originally chosen—well, let's back up a little bit. Murrow was out. He was having one of his bouts with pneumonia or pulmonary disease of some kind. So Don Wilson was Acting Director. There was the ExCom, as it was called, the executive committee in the White House, that ran the operation with President Kennedy, and then there was a working group under that. Walt Rostow chaired the working group under Mac [McGeorge] Bundy of the National Security Council and ExCom. I was put on the working group as the USIA guy.

The thing began early in the week, as I recall, and I was meeting every day in these inter-agency sessions. We were looking at all the various options and doing whatever we could to prepare our principals for the next meetings that they were going into as the crisis unfolded.

Temporary Assignment to VOA to Coordinate All Output Regarding the Crisis

Then on Sunday morning, I came in as usual. We were working full Saturdays and Sundays, of course. I was called down to Don Wilson's office. Don said, “I've got a new assignment for you. I want you to go down to the Voice of America now and stay there until further notice.”

I said, “Well, okay. What are my instructions?”

He said, “You're personally responsible for every word said on the air.”

And I said, “Well, you know, you've got a director down there named Henry Loomis, who I think thinks that's his job.”

He said, “Henry's been informed. We've explained to him that this is such a fast-moving situation that it doesn't reflect any lack of confidence in him or any desire to supplant him, but because we are moving so fast, we've got to have somebody from here who is clued in, whom I can call from the White House the moment an ExCom meeting is organized.”

Well, I was just saying this was the Cuban crisis, and I was being sent by Don Wilson, Acting Director of USIA and member of ExCom, to go down and take over the Voice of America.

Henry Loomis and I had been friends and had worked together successfully in the hierarchy from the time he had been special assistant to Ted Streibert in the 1950s. I had, and still have, the very highest regard for him. It was a little embarrassing to come down a few minutes later and walk into his office and have him stand and say, “Well, here's the desk,” and start reaching for his hat.

I stopped him and said, “Henry, I want you to know that I have absolutely no intent to supplant you here. I'm concerned about only one thing, and that is the immediate output of the Voice. The only way I can handle that is to get right down into the mouth. I'm going to sit at the slot in the newsroom and do everything right from there, because that's where the control point is. I don't want your desk, I don't want your secretaries or anything. I don't need any logistical support. I hope that we can take this in an impersonal fashion. I didn't ask for the job, and I don't want you to feel that I have any desire to infringe or supplant or whatever.”

Well, Henry was contemplating resigning, he told me. I took it as a measure of his perspective and judgment that he simply didn't do so in a huff, but thought about it and, in

fact, discussed it with me. I told him I thought it would be a great mistake for him to resign, that he had made a real contribution as head of the Voice, both temporary and long range, and had more to do, and that I wouldn't be in his hair. Eventually he did think better of it and did not resign.

We had good luck at the Voice. A terrible thing to get hold of all the output, because it was going out in 36 languages, 38, whatever the case was, in addition to the recurring English newscasts. There were all kinds of little subsidiary operations, little feature programs, little interview programs, and so on. To gain absolute authority over everything that was being written for broadcast took some doing. As it turned out, the national radios of the Soviet Union and the U.S. eventually were used as a direct means of communication between Khrushchev and Kennedy, and indeed, it was those exchanges in the open that eventually led to the settlement of the crisis.

I'd like to emphasize this because of my regard for Henry Loomis and the fact that we did not only stay friends, but, indeed, when he became head of Public Broadcasting, he called me up and asked me if I'd be interested in taking a job as his deputy. It's a very, very happy memory of what could have been a very awkward business. So we got through that one. Something similar happened a few years later.

*Q: Before we get to that, how much longer did that assignment continue?*

ANDERSON: I can't remember. I think it went for about three weeks.

*Q: Oh, is that all?*

ANDERSON: Yes. It was just until the crisis was solved and a few days following, and then we were able to turn it back to the normal machinery.

*Q: What happened then? Wilson called you and said, “Your detail is over”?A*

NDERSON: I don't even remember. I probably went uptown one day when things were quiet, and said, “Well, look. They don't need me down there any longer. I'd like to go back to my desk,” and Wilson said, “Okay.” There had never been any formal appointment or anything like that. It was just a purely ad hoc arrangement to get a specific job done, and we did it.

*Q: Did you ever have the impression that Wilson had been ordered by the White House to put such a person as you in that slot?*

ANDERSON: I did have the impression that it was not an independent decision. The whole relationship—I might talk about this for a moment—between the management of the Agency and its radio arm has been a problem for years. The Voice preceded USIA. For a while it was physically located in New York and, therefore, not subject to the immediate kind of hands-on control that you have when you're located in the same town or the same building. Frictions over the years between the desire of the head of USIA to maintain and carry out his responsibilities in connection with the Voice and the feeling on the part of many people at the Voice that they should be independent, just like any private broadcasting outfit, was a source of all kinds of problems all the time. The argument was never really over policy, although that was the word that was used. The argument was over who was going to run the Voice.

*Q: Burnett, I cannot refuse a footnote. I was one of Henry Loomis' deputies before the period you cite. But I'm the one who wrote the charter, what is now known today as the charter of the Voice of America. I wrote it. That took me deeply into the subject you just touched on. The instructions that I was given at that time are on the record. Henry has a copy, as does Cliff Groce, who is writing a history of VOA. I couldn't resist that footnote.*

Let us say that you then returned uptown, as the phrase was in those days. The assignment uptown was what?

Return to Regular Policy/Plans Assignment. Preparation of Weekly Report From Murrow to White House

ANDERSON: It was what it was before, as Associate Deputy Director for Policy and Plans. One of the most delightful aspects of it, even though it was hard work, was doing drafting for Ed Murrow. Ed Murrow rendered a weekly report to President Kennedy, about which he was very, very meticulous, and which I had to draft each week. That, of course, gave me overview of everything that was going on in many areas, and a lot of special assignments. Very often I would go in and spend a full day on the telephone, calling around the world to get immediate reactions from a number of key posts for a special report. Kennedy was very interested in public opinion surveys as they affected our foreign affairs, and we did a lot in that field. I did a lot of writing for Ed, and I also occasionally was called on to draft speeches. Kennedy was not happy with much of what he was getting from the State Department in terms of speeches and so on, and so he would ask Ed, and Ed would ask Don, and Don would ask Tom, and Tom would ask me, and I wound up—well, I can claim that I'm the only person living or dead who ever wrote speeches for Harold Stassen and John F. Kennedy. [Laughter] There is no such other animal.

So it was a great mix of things that affected everything right across the board for the whole Agency, from budget administration, to personnel, to crisis, to routine operations, to the application of policy lines, to the output of all the media. We had Stevens running the Motion Picture Branch, a very creative guy.

*Q: George Stevens.*

ANDERSON: Yes, George Stevens. Not very patient with the bureaucracy, and yet he did some great work. We had some real disagreements. In retrospect, I think probably he was right more often than I was. He did a lot to bring new life and greater professionalism into that motion picture operation.

1964: Deputy Director USIA: Policy and Plans

So there were interesting people, fascinating times. I was getting ready, in fact, to call it quits and get back overseas, where I thought I belonged, when Murrow's untimely death changed everything. Carl Rowan came in as Director and appointed me to the job of Deputy Director for Policy and Plans.

*Q: Was that essentially a continuation of what you had been doing?*

ANDERSON: Yes, it was essentially the same structure. We just sort of picked up and kept going.

*Q: Then he was succeeded by Leonard Marks.*

ANDERSON: Yes.

*Q: Was that true there, also, that you were doing the same work?*

ANDERSON: Exactly. Exactly. It really didn't change. Some of the details would change with a change in directors. For example, I did some speech writing for Carl, but Leonard very rarely ever spoke from formal speeches, and very often didn't really need notes or summaries of what he did, whereas Carl did do quite a bit of public speaking.

*Q: Any comment, Burnett, on either of these men or anything else before we proceed to your next assignment? One question comes up, obviously, which is relations with the State Department during that period. Did it change any?*

ANDERSON: It changed pretty much with every incumbent, but a fairly good routine had been established. We had the so-called fast policy operation with a member of my staff over in all the daily meetings that prepared the State Department spokesman. Then he

came back for a meeting and passed it on to the policy people and the operators in the various media. That part of it became pretty well routine.

I did have other responsibilities of various kinds that were interesting. I was made liaison with the CIA for information operations, which, in essence, required me to meet with them once a week on terms which would not in any way involve us in their operations, but to make sure that in things they were doing, we were not working at cross purposes, their people telling one thing and our people telling something else, as has happened historically.

I was also liaison with the Pentagon for purposes of their information outlets overseas, such as the armed forces broadcasting network and certain other things that they did in public affairs. Again, perhaps more to make sure that we weren't working at cross purposes than to impose any policy line or anything like that.

The main thing in all of this, as I saw it, and I repeated it constantly, was accuracy. Particularly in a large bureaucracy, the danger of things getting distorted or wrong when they're passed from one to the other, from one layer to another, is very great. I used to tell people at the Voice—I don't know if you ever heard this echo back to you—when we would get into these disputes, I would say, “Look, if you would allow me to impose my standards of accuracy on your operation, I would abolish the policy mechanism. What we're talking about is getting the information and getting it right. What policy comes down to is accuracy. To the extent that you're reflecting a government or being interpreted as reflecting our government, you've got to be right. You can't be wrong. If we can get the appropriate level of accuracy, we wouldn't need policy.” So that was my approach, maximum level of accuracy in all these areas where I was functioning.

*Q: You were leading up to the point where you were in the mood to go overseas again, which would have been about 1967.*

1967: Public Affairs Officer - Spain Problems as Transition from Franco Era Approached

ANDERSON: 1967. I had been designated for Argentina, but a health problem delayed it. Instead, I was lucky enough to go off to Spain at an absolutely fascinating time in the history of that noble peninsula. The situation there was that Franco was more or less on his last legs. He was still nominally in charge, but the very tight dictatorship was crumbling a little bit at the edges, and the so-called opposition was being able to articulate itself more and more.

My principal contact was Fraga Iribarne, Minister for Information. We met early in the game and had a very frank talk when I first called on him, and I remember saying, among other things, “I plan to operate here in normal fashion. I hope to be in touch, as we are everywhere, with all segments of your society. If there are people who for some reason you don't want me to be in touch with, it seems to me you've got two choices.” This was the time when there were student riots and so on and evidences of unrest of all kinds. “You can either take the person out of circulation yourself or you can declare me persona non grata.”

I was very eager to work with these emerging parties, because obviously the clock was running, and the end of the Franco regime was inevitable. The old theory, you know, you've got to stay in with the outs or some day you're going to be out with the ins. They were bright people who were, in effect, preparing themselves and in various ways organizing and publishing some fairly incendiary stuff against the day that there would be a change. In fact, I designated one member of my staff, in effect, as the principal liaison with these emerging groups, particularly the young people. This was being watched, and I thought it might lead to some trouble at some point, and it did.

*Q: Were there any specific restrictions placed upon our activities at that time?*
*ANDERSON: Nothing specific. Nothing specific. We presumably would use good judgment, but we did meet with people who were known as oppositionists. What*

*eventually happened was that sometime during 1968, late 1968 or early 1969, there was a crackdown and several people were picked up and put in essentially domestic exile, house arrest, if you will, or something bordering on it, in towns outside of Madrid, including a couple of good friends of mine.*

Then I got word that my staffer, who was operative in this area, was going to be declared persona non grata. I was not able to establish that with certainty, but what I did was I called up Fraga and said that there was this rumor floating around, and I hoped it wasn't true, but if it were true, and if they did declare him persona non grata, I would leave before he did and I would have a press conference if I could before departure or immediately after arriving in the next capital, explaining why I left. So that persona non grata business never happened, as far as I know.

I was fascinated by Spain and delighted by the way that the transition could be made peacefully, the Spaniards apparently finding their way into the latter part of the 20th century and into an integrated Europe without bloodshed or civil war. Civil war was the thing to be feared. If the military had been unwilling to accept a transition to a more representative society, it could have been a very bloody thing. Happily, that didn't happen.

*Q: So you were there two years.*

ANDERSON: Yes.

*Q: And your next assignment?*

1969: Transfer to Paris as Director, USIS France

ANDERSON: Next assignment was what might be called a troubleshooting job. I had gotten something of a reputation as a troubleshooter. In any event, Sarge Shriver wanted me in Paris, and I wasn't ready to leave.

*Q: Sargent Shriver, we should note, was the American ambassador.*

ANDERSON: He was the American ambassador. I managed to stave it off for a while because I wanted to continue working in Spain. I had been sent there for a five-year tour, and was finding it enjoyable and fascinating and rewarding. I'd gotten the language under good enough control so I could go out and lecture without having to read a speech and so on, and do the various things in the language of the country.

But Sarge, when he was reappointed by President Nixon for an additional year or more in Paris, then got insistent. Of course, Paris had its attractiveness, shall we say. In any event, I had no choice but to move on.

*Q: You might explain, Burnett, how you happened to know Shriver.*

ANDERSON: When I was working for Murrow principally, but also later under Rowan and Marks, I did an awful lot of inter-agency work, I was the number-two man on a couple of special groups. I was representative of the Agency on Bobby Kennedy's committee to work on young people. He had gotten that bug when he was on a foreign tour and had been, in effect, assaulted by a mob of youngsters in some Far Eastern country, and decided we should be doing more with young people. I sat on that group. I backed up Murrow and/or Wilson in the special group CI, special group for counterinsurgency, and several other inter-agency things, where occasionally Shriver was also involved.

*Q: Shriver at that time was Director of the Peace Corps.*

ANDERSON: He was Director of the Peace Corps. Also, I had had to see him occasionally about things that we wanted to do vis # vis the Peace Corps in terms of publishing something or whatever, which he generally fought against, because he didn't want us—

*Q: I think this deserves development briefly, at least. He was trying to preserve the purity of the Peace Corps, is that correct?*

ANDERSON: Absolutely. It was an operation of good will and assistance, and he didn't want it in any way to be tainted by association not only with USIA or the CIA, but even trying to keep it removed from the embassies in the country where it was operative. I think the policy was sound, and I think the policy has succeeded.

But in any event, he did insist then that I come to Paris, and I acquiesced and made the move in the summer of 1969, succeeding Lee Brady, who was an old and accomplished French hand. Shriver was fun to work with, very vigorous. I don't think this was generally understood. He was, in his way, flamboyant. He was creative. I used to say, when I had to deal with him, I said, “When you're talking to Sarge, don't ever give him an idea or a proposition until you're solid with it and satisfied with it, because if you suggest something exciting, he'll be halfway across the Pl#ce de la Concorde with it before you finish the sentence.” A great guy to work with. In that regard, you had to know how to work with him.

One thing he said—and curiously enough, he meant it—was, “You know, I am an idea man and I generate a lot of ideas, and I like to think that at least some are good.” But he said, “That may be only two in a hundred. You guys have got to tell me the ones that aren't any damn good so that we won't be doing a lot of crazy things.” And I had occasion from time to time—it was really great—to go over and see him or call him up about something, some piece of paper he had sent over which said, “Let's do this,” or, “Let's do that,” or sent some guy to see me who had some brilliant idea, and I'd have to go in and tell him, “Sarge, a lousy goddamn idea.”

And he'd say, “Then we won't do it, will we?”

I'd say, “No.”

He'd say, “That's what you're here for.” So he did, in fact, really mean that.

He had a conception of the position that I thought was absolutely sound. [Charles] De Gaulle, you know, was president, and we were suffering so-called anti-Americanism to a

considerable degree. There was an awful lot of terribly critical and inaccurate stuff on the TV that nobody had been able to do anything about and so on and so on. But he knew and understood that there is a basic—what should I say?—friendship or pro-American disposition at heart in the population as a whole. He was out to carry the message to De Gaulle through the people, and I think he did it very successfully. Indeed, by the time I came along, after I got into it, we were able to make some real strides with the TV of France, and gradually changed that terribly critical and distorted orientation, which is another long story that I won't try to go into here.

But I considered him an extremely effective ambassador and I became very fond of both him and Eunice. Beneath all the glitter and the play for the public and so on, warm, decent, generous, concerned human beings, both of them. I think when Sarge, from his pinnacle of power and prominence talks about the people who are less fortunate, he's not kidding. He really means it.

*Q: So you had a total of eight years in France?*

ANDERSON: Yes. I thought I'd just go up there and last as long as Shriver, then move on. I never prepared to work in France. Spain was my first romance language. I had German and the Scandinavian tongues, and thought I was more or less naturally cut out for work in that area. But fortunately, I had the wit to settle right in and learn French, because then along came the famous Dick Watson, the younger scion of the IBM hierarchy, and his mottled career, but he wanted me to stay on. Then came Jack Irwin, his brother-in-law, who was as much of a gentleman as his predecessor was not, just a wonderful human being. Then Ken Rush, who had been Deputy Secretary of Defense, got the nod. We regretted that, because Jack had been, we thought, a marvelous, marvelous ambassador, but Ken turned out to be a very solid, very able representative, as well. He left in 1977 after the election, and shortly after that, I was assigned over to London for my last tour with the Agency.

*Q: Those were what years in London?*

1967: Transfer to London as Head of USIS U.K.

ANDERSON: 1967 to 1969. I came in with Kingman Brewster and then left when the 60-year-retirement rule was briefly in effect, just at the time of my 60th birthday. If my birthday had been five months earlier or two months later, I wouldn't have been caught by it. But as it turned out, it was a good thing. It was time for me to move on, and I was glad to do so.

*Q: You were pleased to round out your career in London, then?*

ANDERSON: Oh, yes, indeed. Those were interesting years. London, of course, is an extraordinarily civilized place still, on certainly any comparative basis with other large urban concentrations. I had a lot of fun there.

*Q: Any regrets, reviewing your career? Would you have made different moves if you had had the opportunity?*

ANDERSON: That's a hard question to answer because it's not the sort of thing I think about. Generally, I think I have been so fortunate with the things that have come along at the right time, the right people, the right exposure, that I've never had much occasion to really examine any alternative options, so to speak. The headhunters used to come around once in a while and dangle money in front of me, but nobody ever offered me enough to make me think it would be worth it to give up the world in which I lived, which was foreign affairs and with the element of a certain amount of writing and creativity involved.

Post-Retirement Activities

*Q: I know that you are a very active retiree. Would you like to say what you're doing now and whether any of what you're doing now relates in any way to your government career?*

ANDERSON: Everything relates to a government career when you get down to it, because you're always dealing with people in one context or another. I'm back to what was my original love, and that is writing and editing almost full time. I have developed a specialty in the field of numismatics, coin and currency collecting, and I run a little news bureau here in Washington, doing work mostly in that field for a major publisher with several periodicals.

I also do a little editing and writing. I've written the fourth and fifth editions of the National Geographics book on the Supreme Court. Actually, it's the Supreme Court Historical Society's book, Equal Justice Under Law: The Supreme Court in American Life, which is produced by the Geographic. That's the one you find on the kiosks around town, you know.

Then I edited also for the Historical Society a huge illustrated history of the Supreme Court, published a couple of years ago, which was kind of fun because my son did the photography. It was our first partnership between hard cover, although we do journalistic work together from time to time. My son, Lee, is a professional photographer here in Washington.

Now I've just learned that proofs are coming in on another project involving the Court, a collection of speeches and public statements by retired Chief Justice Warren Burger, which I've been working on as editor for a couple of years. So I do a few projects of that time in terms of editing.

To talk about retirement, I've managed to get myself so broadly committed that I sometimes threaten to go and get a job so that I can rest up.

*Q: Burnett, it's hard to imagine a more satisfying career than yours. I thank you for the time for this interview. I've enjoyed it and I've learned more about you, although we've known each other for many years. We always exchange information.*

ANDERSON: We have, indeed, Jack, and it's a pleasure and a stimulus to sit down like this. I'm not much given to looking back, you know. I take Satchel Paige's advice, “Don't ever do it. Something might be gaining on you.” But I've enjoyed this occasion very much.

*Q: Thanks again.*

End of interview